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THE
Country Gentleman's
A D V I C E
TO HIS
NEIGHBOURS.

By EDWARD WESTON, *Esq;*

The Third EDITION.

With an ADDITION inscribed to the Right
Reverend the Lord Bishop of LONDON.



L O N D O N :

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MY LORD,

THE Desire of Contributing Something, though weak, and inconsiderable, towards Publick Reformation, a Thing so ardently and so justly wish'd for, by all Serious Persons, has induced me to republish, at this solemn Season, and with the Addition of my Name to it, the little Tract, which I subjoin to This Address.

Upon the former Publications, I thought it of no Consequence to make the Author known; but have been now persuaded, that the Curiosity, which would probably be raised, upon the Appearance of a new Writer, might procure it a more general Reading, and that, where Instruction was not wanted, it might at least excite Consideration.

But, my Lord, to answer that End effectually, and at the same Time to add some Degree of Favour, and Prepossession to the Curiosity of a Reader, I have taken the Liberty of inscribing it to your Lordship, with whose Knowledge, and Approbation it was originally publish'd; and of sending it into the World under the Cover, and Passport of your respected Name.

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And

And having now also put upon Paper some farther Reflections of the same Nature, and Tendency with Those in the Piece thus republish'd, of which some have arisen from an Object not then existing, and others are not so directly adapted to the same Species of Readers, I have rather chosen to annex Them to this Address to your Lordship, than to make Them an Addition to that Former Tract.

The solemn, and dreadful Distinction of the Present Time, from any, with which our Age has been acquainted, and the new Warnings to *Repent lest we perish*, which God has lately given to Us,—to all *Europe*,—and perhaps to all Mankind,—may possibly, just at this Instant, recommend a serious Thought to the Lightest Thinker: And as Those Things, which appear'd harmless and indifferent, became Engines of Vengeance in the Hands of God, so Those which are in themselves insignificant, even *this Foolishness* of unqualified *Preaching*, may become Instruments of his Mercy.

I know that by this Intimation of my Opinion concerning the late destructive Earthquake, I shall incur the Censure of Many,—for it seems fashionable to attribute it to *Second Causes*, and it is call'd *Uncharitable* to think it a Judgment.

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As to the First, I have neither Inclination, nor Ability to enter into philosophical Reasonings concerning it. If by *Second Causes* any Man means *Accidental* Ones, He is a Denyer of Providence in the Scripture Sense of it, which assures Us that the Smallest Earthly Things are Objects of the constant Care, and Attention of Almighty God, and that not a Sparrow (how much less a great City?) falls to the Ground, *without our Father*. He will therefore not be convinced by such Arguments as Christians are convinced by.

If it be meant that these *Second Causes* are under the Direction of the *First*, but act in Consequence of a Disposition made, from the Beginning, in Correspondence with his infinite Fore-knowledge, There is no Dispute that I know of, in which Religion is concern'd, with the Supporters of such a Doctrine. We are equally of Opinion that the Thing was *the Lord's Doing*; and the Determination resulting from what was said by our Saviour himself, with respect to a Case differing rather in Degree than in Kind, must justify us in supposing, tho' without entering into Particulars, That the Wickedness of Those who suffer'd, was a Cause of their Suffering.

This however is said to be *Uncharitable*.—
I am very sure that upon the foot of Gospel
Doctrine,

Doctrine, which above all Things recommends *Charity* to Us, It cannot be prov'd to be so.

Besides, it might not be improperly asked, To whom it is *Uncharitable*. Not certainly to the *Living*: For the true *Charity* to Them, upon such an Occasion, consists in exhorting Them to take Example by the Punishment of Others.

Charity to the *Dead* is indeed commendable, But neither Reason, nor Religion can require it to be exercis'd to the Prejudice of the *Living*.

Surely the partial *Tenderness* of Wicked Men for their Brethren in Iniquity, does not deserve the Name of *Charity*; nor their interested Representations both of Sinners, and Sin itself, as less Sinful, than the Scripture stiles Them, and less attended to by the Providence of God. There is indeed a truly *charitable*, and just *Tenderness* towards the Wicked: It is the *Tenderness* of Those, who, Themselves detesting every Species, and Instance of Rebellion against Heaven, set it before Men in it's true light, and *persuade* their Fellow Creatures, and Fellow Subjects, from their Knowledge of *the Terrors of the Lord*, to render Themselves Objects of his Mercy.

This is, as appears to Me, the Duty of every Good Man, as Opportunities may offer,

offer, under the Gospel Injunction of *Charity*. When you are *converted yourself*, You are to *strengthen your Brethren*. But it is more particularly, and constantly incumbent upon Some amongst Us. And it must be acknowledged to have been perform'd upon this great Occasion, with a Zeal, and Affection, and Energy suitable to the Cause.

Yet I cannot but doubt whether the Way often follow'd of setting forth the Profligacy of the Present Age, beyond the Example of Former Times, be well judged, and adapted to the End It is intended to answer.

For it is (in the first Place) possible, that It may not be true : At least it is impossible to prove the Truth of it.

2dly—It seems rather probable that there is as much of real Virtue in the World as Formerly. In this Nation particularly, there is, I suppose no Man, or Woman, who cannot name several, whom They believe to be sincerely Good, and Pious. And it seems really *Uncharitable* to call Those by the hard Names of *Methodists* on the one Hand, or *Formalists* on the other, who give publick Proofs of Devotion towards God, and Benevolence towards Man.

3dly—This Comparative Method of exposing Vice, may seem to some to carry a Supposition, that God's Judgments have
likewise

likewise Respect thereto, which seems not very consistent with our Saviour's Declaration, *I tell you, Nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

4thly—It is likely that Some, who should be the better for such Representations, and Threatnings, may, upon the Credit of History, differ with their Instructor: and particularly, if They should chance to have look'd into the Sermons preach'd soon after the Restoration, they would have there met with such horrid Pictures of the Profligacy, Prophane-ness, and even Atheism of those Times, as might induce Them to believe the World rather mended, than become more Corrupt. And, in Consequence of that Belief, They might be in Danger of losing all the Benefit intended Them by the pious Labours of their Author, or Preacher; and be tempted to draw a Conclusion with respect to the Judgments of God, by no means tending to the farther Advancement of Religion, and Virtue.

So that upon the Whole it seems to Me, that we had better still be governed by the Advice of the Preacher in the Old Testament: “ Say not Thou, What is the Cause
“ that the Former Days were better than
“ These? For thou dost not enquire wisely
“ concerning This.”

But tho' this Comparative Representation of the Moral State of a People be excluded,
there

there is surely sufficient Room, and Foundation for the most earnest Exhortations to Repentance and Amendment, in all Christian Countries, to both Sexes, to all Parties, and Sects, to Clergy as well as Laity, to Great Sinners, and to Small.

One might argue from the Order of Providence—If *God winked* at the Idolatry of Heathens, for many Ages, Will He do the same, for as long a Time, at the Idolatry of Christians?

Is it not probable that he will expect, that our Improvements in Religion and Virtue, should keep Pace with Those in Learning, and Knowledge.

Will he not require a greater Degree of Piety from Christians in general, than from Pagans?—From Reform'd, and Inlightned, than from Ignorant, and Deluded Christians.

And is it not also reasonable, that, from these Notions in particular, He should demand some Fruit of his manifold Blessings? Some more than common Returns of Gratitude, Obedience, and Submission, for the numerous, extraordinary Interpositions of his Providence on our Behalf, and his constant Protection of us from the Scourges of Ecclesiastical, as well as Civil Tyranny, under which some other Nations have groan'd, whilst we here have been happy in the full Enjoyment of our respective Properties, under

der the best, and justest Princes, and in that most valuable of all Liberties, the Liberty of Conscience.

But tho' I do not think We have sufficient Authority to pronounce the present Age more corrupt than the Preceding, There seems great Reason to believe, that in Some particular Vices, and in Some Tendencies to Vice, We may be more culpable Now than Formerly ; and that Some particular Classes of Mankind may be more Vicious.

This is a large Field, in which it is not my Intention to expatiate, but only to hint Some Things to the Consideration of Those, who may be more peculiarly concerned to correct Them, either in Themselves, or in Others ; For in Truth I am persuaded, that the Seeds of Religion, and Virtue are not so sparingly sown in the Minds of Men, even in this decry'd Generation, as some may apprehend ; but that We want Attention to our Duty, rather than the Knowledge of it, and Recollection more than Instruction. This however I do not mention as a favourable Circumstance.

Still it must, I doubt, be confessed, that in That, which is generally the Foundation of all Good or Evil Conduct, I mean Education, there is a visible Deficiency with Respect to the Former, the Sollicitude for the future Welfare of Children being too
often,

often, and by too many, placed rather upon the Objects of this World, than upon Those of the Next. Other Branches of Knowledge are perhaps sometimes, and in some Places, more diligently cultivated in our Schools, than That, which deserves of all others the most diligent Cultivation.

It seems highly reasonable to expect, that, Whereas the Errors of Pagan Idolatry, and the Relaxation of Pagan Morals, do, in a Manner, teach themselves to our Youth, in their Progress thro' the Books of Classical Learning, The Christian Religion, as being, besides its truly Divine Original, the Religion also of their Country, should be *professedly* taught ; Lest They be sent to the Universities, in a disgraceful Ignorance of *the One Thing Needful*, and with Minds neither possess'd of the Knowledge, nor subdued to the Discipline of the Gospel ; and That, at a Time of Life, when They are fully capable both of understanding, and of *obeying the Truth*, and ought to be able to give a Reason of the Faith, which They have learnt to profess.

I will not say there is in this Point no Room for Amendment. Yet I would speak with particular Tenderness upon the Subject, as not having a sufficient Knowledge of the Fact itself, of which the apparent Proofs are not always to be rely'd on ; and

for the Sake of those *Noble* Instances of Religious Education, which are both the Honour of the Present Age, and the Hope of the Next ; and to whom One may with the greatest Pleasure, and I hope with equal Propriety, apply that beautiful Exclamation of the Poet,

Dii Patrii, Quorum semper sub Numine Troja est.
Non tamen omnino Teucros delere paratis,
Cum tales Animos Juvenum, et tam *sancta* tulistis
Pectora. ———

But if there be Any so abandoned of God, and Goodness, as to encourage their own Offspring in Wickedness ; or so indifferent to their own, and their Children's Welfare, as to tolerate, and neglect it in Them, Let Them remember that a Day will come, when even Those indulg'd and pamper'd Children shall appear in Judgment against Them, and perhaps not They only, but *their* Children too, and *their* Children's Children.

This is a dreadful Consideration, and worthy to be well, and frequently reflected on, by every Human Creature, who is, by his Situation, in any Degree responsible for the Conduct of Another ; and by All, whose Example may either check, or promote the Obedience due to the Laws of God.

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It seems to be the Misfortune, rather than any voluntary Guilt of the present Age, that, a certain Habit, and Fashion is established amongst Us, to the Prejudice of Religion, and in which, We are all in different Degrees, by Compliance at least, Accomplices. What I mean is the Disuse of all Serious Conversation in Polite Societies, and the Custom, to which We are inured from our Youths, of confining our Good Will to Each Other, to our Temporal Concerns alone.

This is gone so far, that such Mutual Admonitions, and Reproofs, as the Apostles recommend, would now pass for Affronts; and the Zeal of one Friend for the true Interest of Another, is become incompatible with Friendship.

In many Companies, which yet are not held to be, nor are, of the worst Kind, a Man would have need of some Confidence to own his Devotion to God, and his Attention to his own Eternal Salvation; and thro' Subjection to a faulty, misplaced Bashfulness, he must even blush at using a pious Expression.

This too, as *Solomon* says of some Others, is a fore Evil under the Sun; and God knows whether it be capable of a Remedy, without some very affecting, and awakening Judgment. However, it is every Man's Duty to endeavour to make such a terrible Remedy unnecessary, There

There is another Complaint, the Reverse of the last-mentioned, When the Word of God is quoted upon slight, and ludicrous Occasions, and his most reverend, great Name used familiarly in Conversations of all Sorts, and even in the Midst of our Diversions. I do not speak of Common Swearers, Cursers, and Blasphemers. There can be no need of cautioning any, who have the least Spark of Piety left, against such horrid Prophanations. But I would be understood of Those, otherwise conscientious People, who have used themselves to appeal to Almighty God, upon every trifling Incident, without reflecting upon his adorable Majesty, and of giving him Thanks upon every unworthy Occasion, without either Cause, or Thought of Gratitude.

When the Indecency of this Behaviour is seriously considered, there is no doubt, but such Persons, as are above described, will refrain from adding, by such a wanton Disrespect to their Maker, and Judge, to the Sum, already much too great, of our National Provocations.

I have said Something, in another Place, upon the Subject of Gaming, the Mother, or Nurse of all Immorality, and of all Impiety. But there is a less mischievous Kind of it (at least in it's Beginnings) which I have now my Eye upon, a Species of Play,
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not deep enough to ruin, tho' often to distress, and which has got so strong Possession of the Affections of the Gentry, and others of this Nation, that the Time of almost all our Duties seems to be sacrificed to it. It is in short the Occupation of a great Part of Mankind ; and those, whose tender Ages should be treated with much greater Reverence, and supply'd with more serious Thoughts, are trained up in this School of Inutility. No one can, I think reflect, with any Comfort upon the Prospect, which this affords for another Age, if God should allow us another. But that Consideration may not be so affecting. Let any Person, who would be sorry to be thought deficient either in Religion, or Virtue, and yet spends constantly so undue a Proportion of his Time in this Pursuit, rather than Enjoyment, of unprofitable Pleasure, reflect what will be his Sentiments concerning it, when the Account of all is to be made up. What Delight, or Self Satisfaction, the Recollection of Years so squander'd away will yield upon the Death bed. What Report he will make of the Talents committed to his Care ;—of a whole Life lost to all the Purposes of Living ;—of an Understanding qualified to promote the Service both of God, and Man, but employed in neither ; —of Wealth expended without Charity, and
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of a Mind returning from whence it came without Improvement: This may be the Case of Many, who think not of it.

I have hinted above, that some particular Classes of People amongst us, may be more vicious in This, than in Former Ages. This may possibly be true of the lowest Rank. And in That, rather in great Cities, than in the Country, where I hope there is very little Foundation, for such a Remark. But, if it be generally true, To whom is it owing? Let Those, whose Examples have occasioned it, consider, that it is their Interest to bring Things back to the former State of Innocence; The Interest of Themselves, and Their Posterity; not only That Future One, which is so little, but This Temporal One, which is so highly valued. The Nobility and Gentry can no longer have Wealth, and Security, than the Populace have Honesty, and Religion. But the Fashions must be set Above, for the Small will follow the Great, and Poverty will imitate Riches. Many Instances of this communicable Corruption might be produced. I will venture the Ridicule of naming one: I mean that of regular Attendance upon Divine Service, and regular Keeping of the Lord's Day. It is a common Observation, that to judge by the Appearance in our Churches, the Business of Worshipping God,

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is, for the most part, left to the Women. The Men are supposed to be otherwise employed. But if the Landlord appears at Church, his Tenants, and Servants will be there too. If he spends his *Sunday* in mere Amusements, They will probably spend Their's at the Alehouse. If Coaches and Chaizes were not upon the Roads on *Sundays*, Waggon and Carts would not be upon Them.

This Article is of great Importance: Perhaps of greater than generally thought, to the Morality, and consequently to the durable Subsistence of a Nation. For my own part, I am persuaded, that Nothing carries more evident Marks of Divine Appointment, than the Hallowing of the Seventh Day. Without This, it seems probable that the Knowledge of the true God, and of his Laws, had been totally lost in the World, and that We should have long since fallen back into a State of Idolatry, or Atheism.

This is at least worth the Consideration of Those, who desire to be thought Lovers of Mankind, and Lovers of their Country.

It may be thought, that, in enumerating so many of the Disorders, or Failures of the present Times, I should have taken some Notice of That, which is so loudly complained of, the Decay of Christian Faith.

But there may perhaps be good Reason to hope, that the Complaint, tho' not void of Foundation, may yet be too largely extended. In Multitudes of Instances, a certain Thoughtlessness, and Inattention to Sacred Things, which is indeed highly blameable, because They are the only Things truly worth Attention, may be mistaken for Infidelity. Neither can it be deny'd that the Ideas conveyed under that reproachful Term, are very different in the Minds of different People, tho' Themselves equally pious: and are not exactly the same in the various Communities of Reformed Christians; To which it is consequent, that very different Proofs are, by different Persons, required to be given, of what all equally call by the Name of Faith. I shall therefore, for my own part, content myself with having born my own Testimony, however inconsiderable, in the following Piece, to the Truth of the Gospel of Christ; only adding, and concluding with, the following Remarks with Respect to Divine Revelation—That if any Man is so absolutely sure of Himself, as to be able to declare in the Presence of God, that He has divested his Mind of all Prejudices of all Kinds, especially Those inspired by Sensual Appetites—that he has used impartially every Means in his Power of Knowledge, and Information—
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has fought for Truth with a sincere Affection—and has apply'd by Prayer for Divine Assistance, and Illumination. If such a Man still remains an Unbeliever; He knows his Plea, and must stand or fall to his own Master, and Judge—But as to such unhappy Mortals, tho' to their own Apprehension the Happiest, who have so far immers'd themselves in the Cares and Occupations of the present Moments, that they have not Leisure so much as to compute the Difference between That, and Eternity—Who are so slavishly attach'd, and captivated, either to Vicious, or to Unprofitable Amusements, as to give greater Attention to the Voice of Pleasure, than to the Voice of God—Who refuse to consider the Pretensions of Revelation for Fear of Conviction, and reject the Saviour of Mankind, upon the same Principle, on which the Jews rejected Him, because his *Kingdom is not of this World*—Their Case appears terribly different from That of the former Species of Infidels — It imports Them highly to reflect, in Time, upon that Difference.

I am with the sincerest Respect,

My LORD,

*Your Lordship's most dutiful
and obedient humble Servant,*

E. WESTON.

January 31, 1756.



T H E

Country Gentleman's

A D V I C E

T O H I S

N E I G H B O U R S.

My good Friends and Neighbours,

B E I N G desirous, during my necessary Absence from **** to give You some Token of my Remembrance, some Proof that my Heart is with You, I thought I could not do it better, than in sending You my Opinion, and Advice, upon those Things wherein Your Interest is concerned.

I am persuaded that none of You can have any Doubt of my Inclination to promote it upon all Occasions, and hope I have not passed my Time so unfruitfully amongst You, as that You should be at a Loss to know in what I think it chiefly consists.

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If I could suggest to You any Method of improving Your Worldly Substance, and adding to Your Wealth consistently with good Conscience, I would by no Means be silent upon that Head ; but my present Address to You has Objects of another, and infinitely more valuable Kind in View.

It is very true, and I acknowledge it with Pleasure, that You have able and religious Teachers in Your several Parishes, and that You hear from them, once every Week, that You have *a Soul to be saved*, and by what Means it is to be *saved*.

Yet I hope none of You are so destitute of true *saving* Knowledge, as to think, that Religion is the Business of Your *Sundays* only, or that the great Concern of Eternity deserves no more than a Seventh Part of Your present Time.

As You cannot be so great Enemies to Your own Welfare, as to think thus narrowly of Religion, You ought, and I doubt not will, esteem that Man Your Friend, who endeavours to bring it home to You, by informing Your Understanding, or at least refreshing Your Memory concerning the real Duties of it, in Order

der to make it a frequent Object of Your Reflexions in Your Houses, in the Field, in the Markets, as well as in the Churches.

I do not say that You should think of nothing Else but Religion : *for then* (as St. Paul says upon another Occasion) *must Ye needs go out of the World.* But this I say, that You should so accustom Your Minds to the Desire, and Design of pleasing God in all Things, that You should, even by Habit, make *That* the Standard of every Thought, every Word, and every Action.

And do not imagine that my applying myself to You upon this Subject is owing to any Apprehension that You have more Occasion for such Exhortations than Others : I can assure You most sincerely, that it is not ; for I can say with Truth, that I have found You in General a Sober, Peaceable, and Uncorrupted People. But it is declared by an Apostle, that *in many Things We offend all*, and there is surely None so very good, but that they may receive Benefit from Mutual Admonitions.

You are certainly happy in being at such a Distance from any of those great Sinks of Iniquity, where Ingratitude, and Disrespect to Our greatest Benefactor is fashionable,

fashionable, and Neglect of our immortal Souls an Accomplishment. You may thank God that the Contagion has not Yet reached You.

It is a Melancholy Thing to consider, that Thousands of Those who acknowledge their Expectation of a Future State, and of those Rewards and Punishments, which God hath appointed, will not yet take so much Pains, nor exercise so much self Denial for the obtaining the One, and avoiding the Other, tho' believed Eternal, as they do for procuring to themselves the Enjoyment of some Momentary Pleasure, perhaps a Vicious one, or for the escaping some Bodily Distemper, or other Temporary Evil.

You cannot but be sensible of the Perverseness and Absurdity of such a Conduct, and it will need no Reasoning to convince You, that the true Standard, and Computation of Happiness and Unhappiness, is the Length, or Shortness of their Duration.

Let me advise You to make this Comparison the Subject of Your frequent Meditation. You are, and justly, anxious about the Fruit and Product of Your worldly Care and Labour; Endeavour to raise in Your Minds the same Sollici-
tude

lude about the Consequences of all Your other Actions, remembering that the Profit, or Loss, is Eternal.

I do not propose to enter here into a particular Description of every Point of Christian Duty. I should pay a very ill Compliment, as well to Your worthy Ministers, as to Yourselfes, in supposing You to want Instruction therein. I would rather excite You to the Practice of what You already know, than pretend to teach You any Thing, that You do not.

You know as well as I, or any Man can tell You, What it is to be Honest, and Sober, and Chast, and Humble, and Meek; You know what is Good Nature, and Truth and Piety; You are acquainted too, Who it is that expects these Things from You; And what You have to hope, or to fear from Him.

With this Knowledge, is it possible to be Unconcerned, and Indifferent? When Your Thoughts, and Words, and Actions here, have such a Connexion with Eternity, Can You take a Step in this World, which will not put You in Mind of the Next?

Yet, tho' I do not propose to enumerate, and inforce to You every Precept

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of God's Moral Law, there are two or three Points, which I cannot help mentioning more particularly.

The First is what relates to the Indulgence of unlawful Love, which, tho' most expressly prohibited by the Gospel, is treated by many, in this enlightened Age, and Country, as a slight Offence : And there are some, who will talk of their own Transgressions against this Divine Law, without Remorse ; and even boast of their diabolical Conquests over Innocence, and Virtue.

Against this Crime therefore, I would endeavour, in an especial Manner, to arm Your Minds, because there is more than ordinary Danger from Without, as well as from Within ; from the Suggestions of profligate Companions, backed and abetted by Those of inward Passion.

But consider, or, if You have no Occasion Yourself for such Consideration, make the Young People, for whom You may be concerned, as a Father, or Master, consider, that He who corrupts a Woman, is guilty of a vile Dishonesty ; that he robs some Husband of the Property which God has allotted him, and of the Peace, and Happiness of his Life ;
that

that He brings Discredit, and Grief upon some Father, Mother, or other Relations ; that he gives Birth perhaps to an Infant, whose Innocence will not protect Him from the Reproaches of his Parent's Infamy ; that he strips, and plunders a Fellow Creature of that Virtue, which should support Her in this World, and in the next ; that He is very probably the Occasion of Distress, and Misery to the Partner of his Shame, and very probably too, of her being driven by that Distress, to an abandon'd Prostitution ; And what else can he expect at the Hands of the Righteous Judge, but to be called to answer, in the last Day, for the Soul, which he has destroyed, and to take his Share in the Punishment of every Sin, of which he has been the Occasion ?

But perhaps, He is not the Corrupter, He only follows in the Track of Vice began by another : Is he therefore innocent ? Will He, that receives the Stolen Goods, be allowed to plead that he did not Steal Them ? Let this Wise Distinguisher bring forth his Reasons ; Let him see if he can justify, before his Maker and his Judge, the comforting, abetting and encouraging a Fellow Subject in Re-

bellion against Him ; the paying the Price of Sin, by hiring another to commit it, and the preventing, as much as in him lies, the return of a Guilty Soul to God.

When You reflect upon these Things, You will see very plainly the Reason, why St. *Paul* has so positively declared, that * no Adulterer, nor Fornicator shall enter into the Kingdom of God. And I hope Your Reflexion thereupon will be sufficient to keep You clear from those Great Offences.

But perhaps some may think, that if they keep to one Woman only, living with her in all Respects as a Husband with a Wife, the Matrimonial Ceremony may be safely omitted, as a mere human Institution. But let such ask their own Consciences, whether their secret Reason for omitting that Ceremony, be not, that They may have the Liberty of separating Themselves, at their Pleasure, from the Woman, whom they pretend to regard as a Wife ; And, if that be the Case, Let them not represent that Conduct as Conformable to the Law of God, which is founded upon a Reservation to themselves of a Power to break

* 1 Cor. vi. 9.

it, whenever they shall be weary of complying with it.

But these Irregularities are, I hope, very rare amongst Us.

The Thing which I shall next mention to You, and desire to Caution You against, is *Gaming*, Which is of late, to the great Grief of all good Men, crept into several Towns in Your Neighbourhood. Consider this only in the Light of Worldly Prudence, Can You think it reasonable to hazard What You have earn'd with the Sweat of Your Brow, by long Labour, and Care, upon the Chance of a Moment, and to hazard it perhaps against Those, whose Profession is Knavery, and who have no other Subsistence but what arises from the Plunder of Your unguarded Simplicity? Or can You expect Honesty, and a faithful Management of Your Concerns from Your Sons, and Servants, if You suffer them to expose themselves to so great a Temptation?

Look upon this Practice in a Religious View, Can there be a greater Immorality than to stake the Maintenance of Your Wife, and Children, upon the Cast of a Dye, or Turn of a Card; to play for the future Happiness of Yourself

self, or Neighbour ; and to put Yourself Voluntarily into a Situation, where You must either ruin, or be ruined ; and Where, if You have any Pleasure, it must arise from the Grief, and Misery of Your Fellow Christian ?

If there be *Drunkenness* amongst You, if there be *Swearing*, and *Obscene Talking*, if *Pilfering* amongst the poorer Sort, especially from their Benefactors, and any Species of *Dishonesty* and *Fraud*, with regard to Buying, Selling, Paying of Rent, Tythes, Taxes, or any other Matter, amongst the more Substantial ; I have the Pleasure of thinking that they are not very commonly practised in our Country, and shall therefore content myself with exhorting Those unhappy People, whose Consciences may accuse them of any such Transgressions, to remember, before it is too late, that *for all these Things God shall bring them to Judgement.*

If these Reflexions make the Impression they ought upon You, and You are desirous to know more perfectly, *What You should do to be saved*, the best Advice which I can give You, is, to seek for the Law of God, in the Book of
God,

God, and to compare Your Behaviour with the Rules laid down in the Gospel.

You will there see what Sort of Obedience is required by Our Lord and Saviour, to make us worthy Members of his Kingdom; that it must be a Compliance, not with This, or That, but with all his Commands; That it must proceed from a purified Heart, purified, as much as possible in this Carnal State, from all secret Approbation of Sin,—— and from a sincere Desire of pleasing God.

You will see too, that the promoting this Glory of God, this Universal Obedience of his Creatures to him, was of so great Consequence, that it was the Cause, why * *all Scripture was given*, and one of the great Objects even of the Death of Christ.

And You will observe that, amongst all those Commandments of God, what is chiefly insisted on, as the *New*, the *Royal*, and the most important *Law*, is *Charity*, which I chuse to mention particularly to You, that You may not understand it, in that Narrow and Limited Sense only, to which our Language commonly applies it; I mean the giving

* 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. Tit. ii. 14.

Alms to the Poor, (That being in Truth but one Branch of it) But may know, that, when You are ordered to be *Charitable*, You are ordered to bear sincere Good-Will to all Men, of all Denominations, of all Countrys, of all Sects, and Partys; looking upon them, without Distinction, as Your *Neighbours*, forgiving Offences, justifying Characters, discouraging Scandal, reconciling Differences, and seeking all Opportunities to promote the Welfare, both Temporal and Eternal, of all, with whom You have any Connexion.

Lastly, You will see with Joy and Gratitude, that to him, who thus sincerely obeys God, delighting in the Performance of his Will, and preferring his Approbation to all other Things whatsoever, *Exceeding great and precious Promises* are made, and that even Everlasting Happiness, *an Eternal Weight of Glory*, (as it is stiled by St. Paul) is reserved for Those, who shall come off Conquerors in this Contention with the World, with Themselves, and with the great Adversary of God, and Man; Not however, as due to the Merit of our own imperfect Performances, but from the free Gift and Bounty of God, in
Con-

Consideration of the Death and Sacrifice of Our blessed Saviour, the only begotten Son of God, who dyed upon the Cross for our Sins, and gave his Life, as he has himself declared * *a Ransom for Many*.

Now this being the Case, You will not wonder to find that Faith in this great Author of our Salvation, (*viz.*) A firm Reliance upon the Promises of God thro' him, should be likewise required of Us, and that, as *Abraham's* Dependance upon the Power and Veracity of God, first to give him a Son, and then to raise that Son from the Dead, both contrary to the common Course of Nature, was reckon'd to him for Righteousness, So We too, should be required to give Credit (if I may so say) to Almighty God, for the Means of our Restoration, and Reconcilement to him, tho' incomprehensible to Us; and to accept of Happiness in the Way, wherein he is pleased to offer it. For if You will † *count the Blood of the Covenant an unholy Thing*; how can You be *sanctified* by it? If You reject the Sacrifice, What share can You have in the Attainment?

* Matt. xx. 28. Mark x. 45. † Heb. x. 29.

When You have fully consider'd and ponder'd in Your Hearts this great and wonderful Instance of the Mercy, and Love of God, and have added to it all the other innumerable Blessings, for which we are all indebted to his Gracious Providence, You will hardly want the Assistance even of Scripture, to teach You, that he is to be reciprocally Loved, by his Creatures, and constantly Worshiped by Them, (*viz.*) adored and praised with humble Thanksgiving in Publick, and in Private, for his infinite Goodness, and intreated with the devoutest Prayers to continue it to Us. If You judge rightly of Yourself and of Him, You will think it Your highest Privilege, and Honour, and Comfort to have this Access to him thro' Christ, and will omit no Opportunity of testifying Your Gratitude, acknowledging Your Dependence, and proclaiming Your Trust in him; And more particularly, if You find any peculiar Method instituted by our great Redeemer for our perpetual Commemoration of what he did, and suffered for Us, (as You will find such a One in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper) You will not be diverted by any trivial and unworthy Pretences from appearing constantly

constantly *there*, to declare Your Subjection, to avow Your Obligations, and to renew Your Engagements, in the Face of the Congregation, to this most High, most Powerful, and most Beneficent Saviour.

But if, upon thus searching the Scriptures, as I have before advised You, in Order to learn the Will of God, You should be terrified with the long Catalogue of Duties, and with the Penalties under which they are enacted ; If, upon comparing the Task to be performed with Your own Strength to perform it, Your Heart should faint within You, so that You should be ready to cry out, *Who is equal to these Things ?* The same Scripture will give You Comfort herein also, for it will teach You that We are not as formerly, under the rigid Covenant, either of the Adamical, or Moisaical Law, where every Transgression was Fatal, and no Supernatural Assistance promised ; But that the same Merciful Lawgiver, who has assigned everlasting Rewards to *Obedience*, has given Us by the Gospel Covenant his Holy Spirit to aid Us in *Obeying*, to direct Us in the Way, and strengthen Us in the Pursuit

Pursuit of Eternal Glory. This is that Spirit of God, that Advocate or Comforter, whom Our Saviour promised to all Believers, the Spirit which both raised Him from the Dead, and who will raise Us too, if We concur with his holy Motions, first from the Death of Sin, and, in God's due Time, from the Death of Nature also.

But this is not all: The Mercy of God does not stop here neither. Christianity is not more a Law of Faith, and of Practice, than it is a Proclamation of Pardon. This is the *Good News* which our Saviour himself came to tell Us, and which he ordered his Disciples to carry into all Parts of the World—the Doctrine of *Repentance unto Life*.

And besides all this, We have a merciful constant Intercessor, in Our behalf, at the Right Hand of God, the same, who created Us, who died for Us, and who will hereafter judge Us. *If any Man Sin, says St. John, We have an Advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the Righteous, and He is the Propitiation for Our Sins.*

If any one therefore has been so unhappy as to spend some Part of his
Life

Life in Disobedience, or if the Course of his Duty be sometimes interrupted by sudden Effects of Surprize and human Passion, Let him not therefore despair of Mercy, but endeavour sincerely to qualify himself for it, by Complying with the Terms of the Gospel, I mean, by a true and unfeigned Repentance, which consists in the Sorrow and Shame of having Offended ; in a Change of the Mind, and Disposition, from Evil to Good ; in a total abandoning of all those Things, wherein We have Sinned ; and in turning with the whole Heart unto God ; humbly imploring Pardon of what is past, for his Sake, who died to obtain that Pardon for Us ; and begging the Assistance of his Holy Spirit to secure Us from future Miscarriages.

If any Man be dissatisfied with this Sketch of Christian Duty and Christian Faith—If he would direct You to other Mediators between God and Man, besides the Man Christ Jesus.—If he would teach You new, and different Methods of obtaining Reconciliation, and Pardon —If he would have You think meanly of Moral Virtue, as of no Value in the Sight of God, and persuade You, Con-
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trary to the exprefs Declaration of St. *John*, that * *He that does Righteousness is not Righteous* ; both multiplying, and magnifying the Terms of Our Salvation, beyond what our Saviour, and his Apostles taught, and requiring Angelical Perfection of Mortal Man—Or, if he would make You believe, that the Spirit of God does not only assist, and strengthen Us in our Course, but does in Effect run it in our stead, being the Sole Doer of all our Good Deeds, and Performer of all our Obedience ; leaving thereby no real Choice of Good and Evil in Man, and Consequently neither Room for present Tryal, nor Equity in Future Judgment—And if he tells You that the Operations of this same Spirit must be felt, and distinguished within You, perplexing Your Minds, with subtle Questions of Man's Wisdom, about Grace, and Regeneration, and Experiences, and Instantaneous Conversions—The best Advice that I can give You in such a Case, is, to require a Proof of such Teachers, as These, that they are not wise *above what is written*, by calling on them to shew You their Doctrines *plainly* contained in the Word of God. And let

* 1 Ep. iii. 7.

not any one impose upon Your Simplicity by the Use of hard unscriptural Terms, or by long and difficult Inferences pretended to be deduced from Thence, for You may be assured, that what is not there clearly expressed, and does not lye open to Your Comprehension, can be no Law to You, since it is impossible that God should impose any Law upon his Creatures, and make the Terms of it at the same Time unintelligible to them; and little less than Blasphemy to suppose, that the Righteous Judge should try Us by a Rule, which he has not given Us Capacities either to find Out, or to Understand.

If indeed any Person imagines, that by superior Degrees of Knowledge acquired by the immediate Impulse and Illumination of the Spirit (which some lay Claim to) he has discovered new and more exalted Rules of Christian *Duty*, with Respect either to Belief, or Practice, They may in Truth become obligatory upon Him, to whom they should thus appear in the Light of *Duties*. But let not that Man pretend to impose his Persuasions upon the Consciences of Others, till he can produce his Credentials

tials from God to preach a different Gospel from that which You have received; Or, in other Words, till he can give You that Proof of his particular Inspiration, which You have a Right to require, by Working Miracles, as Our Saviour, and his Apostles did.

F I N I S.



